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Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

St Illtyds R.C. High School
Newport Road
Rumney
Cardiff
CF3 1XQ

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by

Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales

About St Illtyds R.C. High School

St. Illtyd's Catholic High School is an English-medium 11-16 school in the east of Cardiff.

There are currently 872 pupils on roll compared with 849 at the time of the last inspection in 2012. The school receives pupils from local Catholic primary schools and from other primary schools across the east of the city.

Around 28.0% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average of 16.4%. Over 67% of pupils live in the 20% most deprived areas in Wales. The school welcomes pupils of all faiths and those with no faith background. The school population is ethnically diverse. No pupils speak Welsh at home, and a few pupils speak English as an additional language. The school receives pupils from the full ability range. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is around 33%, well above the national average of 22.9%. The percentage of pupils who have a statement of special educational need is similar to the national average.

The current headteacher took up post April 2018. The senior leadership team consists of the headteacher, two senior assistant headteachers, three assistant headteachers, and business manager.

Estyn does not inspect religious education or the religious content of collective worship when it is a school with a religious character. Instead, the governing body is required by law to arrange for religious education and collective worship to be inspected separately.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en

Summary

Through its mission, 'Together in Christ, we make a difference', the school has built an inclusive community where every individual is valued. Pupils participate enthusiastically in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and most volunteer to support local charities. Many pupils behave well and generally have a positive attitude to their work, particularly in lessons with practical tasks. However, a few pupils do not engage sufficiently in their work.

Most staff establish positive working relationships with their pupils. The majority of teachers deliver well-planned lessons that enable many pupils to make suitable progress, particularly in the core subjects. However, assessment practices are underdeveloped and a minority of teachers do not explain clearly enough how pupils can improve the quality of their work.

The recently appointed headteacher is providing sound leadership and a clear sense of purpose, based on creating an inclusive school with care and concern for others at its heart. Although there are a range of suitable policies and processes in place, these do not always work coherently. Leaders do not act promptly enough on the findings from self-evaluation activities. In particular, they do not consider sufficiently the effectiveness of provision by its impact on pupils' skills, or plan well enough for improvement.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	**Adequate and needs improvement**
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	**Adequate and needs improvement**
Teaching and learning experiences	**Adequate and needs improvement**
Care, support and guidance	**Adequate and needs improvement**
Leadership and management	**Adequate and needs improvement**

Recommendations

R1 Raise standards, across the school, in particular at key stage 4

R2 Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership, including self-evaluation and improvement planning, at all levels

R3 Improve the quality of teaching and assessment

R4 Improve behaviour

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will review the school's progress.

Main findings

Standards: Adequate and needs improvement

Many pupils recall prior learning suitably and achieve standards that are generally appropriate for their age and ability. However, a minority of pupils do not apply new learning well enough and do not make sufficient progress across the curriculum.

In lessons, many pupils listen attentively and with respect to the teacher and to their peers. A majority of pupils contribute willingly to class discussion and around half of pupils express their ideas clearly, such as when they evaluate their practical work in drama. A very few pupils respond thoughtfully to questions posed by the teacher. However, a minority of pupils' verbal contributions are brief and underdeveloped, often because these pupils do not have sufficient vocabulary, knowledge or skills to develop their ideas.

When reading, most pupils show a sound basic understanding of the texts they consider. Generally, many locate and extract information from source material well. A majority of pupils interpret a range of fiction and non-fiction texts appropriately, such as when analysing persuasive techniques in an advert for an animal charity. A minority of pupils have well-developed inference and deduction skills and make sensitive and well-considered points, which they back up well with evidence, for example when they outline the pros and cons of social media, or elaborate on the meaning of the love poetry they study.

In a few subjects, many pupils write at length suitably for a varied range of purposes. These pupils organise their written work suitably and make relevant language choices, including the effective use of subject specific terminology. A few more able pupils write with flair and skill and have a rich vocabulary, for example when they write empathy pieces based on Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* or when explaining how J.B.Priestley conveys his political ideas through the play *An Inspector Calls*. However, a majority of pupils are over-dependent on scaffolding. In addition a minority of pupils frequently misspell common words and make grammatical errors, particularly with capital letters and full stops, and a few do not always use paragraphs.

A majority of pupils have sound basic number skills and are confident in making simple mental calculations. These pupils apply their skills appropriately to straightforward numerical problems in a very few areas of the curriculum, such as when calculating the cost of using electrical energy in science. However, a few have poor recall of recent work and this hampers their progress. Most pupils construct suitable graphs, for example to illustrate the rate of photosynthesis or analyse food choices. However, a minority of pupils do not draw or label graphs or charts carefully enough or with sufficient accuracy.

Most pupils search confidently online for information, prepare presentations, and create documents suitably across the curriculum. However, beyond these straightforward tasks, pupils' development of their information and communication technology (ICT) skills is limited.

In a very few lessons, pupils develop their creativity and thinking skills well. For example when improvising using syncopated Latin American rhythms in music. However, pupils do not apply their thinking and creativity skills to their work often enough.

A majority of pupils make suitable progress in their understanding and use of the Welsh language and their basic vocabulary is sound. These pupils mostly deal well with an appropriate variety of simple, highly structured, speaking, reading and writing tasks. However, generally, pupils' attitudes towards the language are not positive, and a minority lack the confidence to engage in discussion work.

Over the last four years, performance at key stage 4 has been variable and up to 2018 has generally compared well with that in similar schools. In the three years up to and including 2017, pupils made strong progress across many indicators, significantly so in around half. In 2018, performance at key stage 4 declined markedly in nearly all indicators, and compares less favourably with that in similar schools in most indicators.

Although performance in the capped points score fell in 2018, it compares well to that in similar schools. In two of the last three years, performance in the level 2 threshold including English and mathematics has compared well with that in similar schools, though it declined in 2018. In most subjects beyond the core, pupils do not make enough progress. Although the proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE or equivalent qualifications at A*-A improved slightly in 2018, it remains below levels in similar schools.

Over the three years prior to 2018, the performance of boys and girls respectively has been similar to or better than that of boys and girls in similar schools in most indicators. However, in 2018, the performance at key stage 4 of both boys and girls declined in every indicator, and boys significantly so in most. Similarly, the performance of pupils eligible for free school meals compared well with levels attained by their counterparts in similar schools but also fell in most indicators in 2018. Those with additional learning needs make generally suitable progress against their targets. The exception for all groups of pupils is their performance in the capped points score, which, despite a decline in 2018, continues to compare well with levels in similar schools.

At the end of Year 11, nearly all pupils remain in full time education either in the school or in a further education college.

In 2018, nearly all pupils were entered for a Welsh language qualification and a minority achieved a level 2 qualification. However, the number of pupils entered and their outcomes in Welsh qualifications has been variable over the last three years.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Many pupils are polite and courteous to staff, each other and visitors to the school. Most pupils feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe in on-line activities. When they have personal challenges or concerns, most pupils feel well supported by staff. Many feel that the school deals well with the few incidents of bullying.

Many pupils behave well during lessons and at break and lunchtimes. In lessons, they maintain a suitable focus on their tasks and pay attention to the teacher. However, in a minority of lessons a few pupils are not engaged in their work and disrupt learning for themselves and other pupils.

In practical lessons, many pupils engage well, are enthusiastic and demonstrate a high level of commitment to the tasks set. For example, in drama nearly all pupils make meaningful contributions to devising a physical theatre performance. However, the majority of pupils do not have sufficiently well-developed independent learning skills. A minority lack sufficient resilience, for example, they seek help from the teacher too quickly without attempting tasks first for themselves and frequently leave work unfinished. A minority of pupils do not take sufficient care over the presentation of their work.

Most pupils understand the importance of a sensible diet and taking part in healthy activities. A minority participate in the extra-curricular sporting activities offered by the school such as netball, gymnastics and basketball.

Pupils support enthusiastically a range of charities, including those associated with the Catholic faith. This develops their social and life skills well. For example, they have raised funds and donated items to local and national charities such as CAFOD and Llamau. They also contribute meaningfully to community organisations by volunteering their time.

A few pupils undertake leadership roles and responsibilities, for example, as peer mentors in Year 11 providing support to younger pupils. However, the role of the school council is underdeveloped. As a result, it has had only a limited impact on improving aspects of school life.

Teaching and learning experiences: Adequate and needs improvement

Most teachers have secure subject knowledge. In the best lessons, they communicate enthusiasm and passion for their subject.

The majority of teachers deliver well-planned lessons that they structure appropriately and consequently enable pupils to make suitable progress. They provide well-designed resources and purposeful explanations to support pupils in their learning. In a few subjects, teachers plan particularly engaging practical tasks or well-structured group activities that engage pupils successfully and enthuse them about their learning. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils. These few teachers inspire, challenge and enable pupils of all abilities to make strong progress.

Many teachers establish positive working relationships with pupils. Many manage pupil behaviour appropriately, working effectively with learning support assistants. However, only a few teachers provide fruitful opportunities for pupils to learn independently, either on their own or in groups. A minority of teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of pupils' behaviour and progress, and do not challenge low-level disruption firmly enough. In these cases, the pace of learning is too slow and pupils quickly lose interest in their work.

The majority of teachers monitor pupils' work appropriately during lessons. They provide helpful and constructive verbal feedback. In a very few cases, teachers make suitable use of success criteria to help pupils complete tasks and to refine their work. A majority of teachers use questioning pertinently to check pupils' understanding. However, a minority of teachers do not question effectively to probe understanding and often rely heavily on responses from a small group of pupils. In many cases teachers' written feedback does not indicate what pupils are doing well or explain clearly how they can improve the quality of their work. Overall, too much written feedback is superficial, overgenerous or unhelpful.

The curriculum at key stage 3 provides relevant opportunities for pupils to gain suitable knowledge, skills and understanding. Key stage 4 options offer most pupils a relevant range of pathways that meet their needs and aspirations. The school has appropriate extra-curricular provision for more able and talented pupils, though, in many lessons, they do not encounter sufficient challenge. The provision for pupils at risk of disengagement is limited.

Provision for the Skills Challenge Certificate provides valuable experiences for pupils to engage meaningfully with employers and community organisations. Working with initiatives such as Big Ideas Wales and Business Class, the school enables pupils to experience relevant work-related education. For example, as part of the enterprise and employability challenge, pupils generate ideas and create business plans to show how they will fundraise for a local health charity. They take part in business consultation meetings with employers and participate usefully in challenging competitive tasks involving health professionals and charity ambassadors.

The school provides a broad range of enrichment activities for pupils to visit employers, universities and events. These experiences have a positive impact on raising pupils' aspirations and inspiring them to think about their future.

The school plans appropriately for the progressive development of pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills through its strategic planning groups. School leaders use assessment data to identify suitable interventions for pupils with weaker skills. Pupils have relevant opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in registration time. However, overall, the school does not provide effective enough opportunities for pupils to develop progressively their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum.

The school provides suitable provision for the development of pupils' Welsh language. However, the school provides very few opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of Welsh heritage and culture.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

St Illtyd's School has an inclusive and supportive ethos underpinned by generally positive working relationships between staff and pupils and a commitment to Catholic values. The school has appropriate pastoral systems and provision, including the weekly wellbeing bulletin, individual care plans and use of the chaplaincy. These support the wellbeing of pupils effectively. Links with a wide range of external agencies such as youth mentors and Action for Children enhance this provision. The school has developed a suitable approach to dealing with incidents of bullying.

The school develops pupils' spiritual and moral development effectively through assemblies, prayers, tutor periods, visiting speakers and the personal and social education programme. The school's St Illtyd's Day celebrates the shared values of tolerance and inclusivity. The recently introduced diocesan personal and social education programme ensures that pupils receive valuable guidance on issues such as alcohol, drugs, healthy living, keeping fit and online safety.

By providing opportunities for participation in school shows, theatre and university visits the school makes an appropriate contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. The school also has meaningful opportunities for pupils to learn about diversity and the rights of others. For instance, a group of pupils redrafted the school's anti-racism policy and presented to staff and pupils about their changes. Through the Welsh Baccalaureate, pupils produced a film for people who have difficulty accessing parts of a local heritage site. Pupils receive valuable careers advice from the careers service, colleges and through useful visits to local businesses.

The school has appropriate arrangements for healthy eating and drinking. A cooking group for pupils and their families promotes healthy eating and develops cooking skills across different generations.

A new tracking system is in place to monitor the academic progress of pupils across both key stages. Teachers use data from this system appropriately to identify pupils who would benefit from extra support, though it is too early to evaluate the impact of this. However, in 2018, the school did not use the information from their tracking systems well enough to target underperformance effectively.

Pastoral leaders monitor attendance closely and there is a range of useful strategies to encourage and reward good attendance.

The new 'Behaviour for Learning' policy is becoming more familiar to staff and pupils, and is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes. However, a minority of staff apply procedures inconsistently. The school conducts regular meetings to discuss pupils of concern. Although these meetings enable staff to consider how well pupils are doing in broad terms, they do not evaluate the impact of specific interventions precisely enough.

Pupils with additional learning needs benefit from specialist provision in key stage 3 which, combined with a useful transition programme, enables them to access a suitably tailored curriculum in key stage 4. It has suitably targeted interventions to meet these pupils' needs and the smaller ASPIRE classes ensure pupils with more diverse needs make appropriate progress.

The school communicates well with parents using email, text messages, the newsletter and a school to parent app. The school has established an effective approach to providing parents with information about their child's progress. Interim and annual reports keep parents informed about their child's progress at school and tell them how to improve current performance. Through reporting day events, parents and pupils are able to engage valuably with school staff and other agencies that offer support for learning and wellbeing. This has contributed to improved parental engagement with the school.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Adequate and needs improvement

The recently appointed headteacher has fostered effectively an ethos of openness, trust and collaboration. His calm, sincere leadership, founded on building strong working relationships, is succeeding in establishing a sense of stability in the school. He has taken good account of the needs of the school and its community in developing a vision that is based on clear, overarching priorities and shared values. Leaders promote this vision well and its key messages are reflected in much of the life and work of the school. As a result, there is collective sense of purpose and a commitment to improvement.

The headteacher has taken a sensitive approach to change management. He is reviewing leadership responsibilities across the school, although the current structure is not equitable.

In recent years, the school has developed a number of useful systems and processes. These have helped the school to achieve its objectives, and have contributed to the school's strong performance across many indicators up until 2018. However, work to align these processes is at an early stage of development and currently they do not provide a cohesive enough approach to support continuous improvement. There is a suitable programme of leadership meetings, including appropriate arrangements for performance management. However, these processes are not sharp or strategic enough. Meetings focus too heavily on operational matters and actions are not followed up sufficiently well. Overall, performance management objectives are not measurable enough, and in a few cases they are unsuitable.

The school has suitable systems of accountability in place, such as regular line management meetings, monitoring of pupils' performance, departmental reviews and presentations to the governing body. However, over recent years, leaders have not always tackled underperformance in a timely enough or effective way.

Governors are supportive of the school. They are developing their skills beneficially and are keen to improve their role as a critical friend. They have challenged the school appropriately over aspects of performance. However, governors do not have a sufficiently detailed understanding of performance data, which means that they are not able to ask specific enough questions about pupils' achievement.

Leaders have a sound understanding of most of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The new headteacher and the senior leadership team have identified suitably specific aspects of the school's work in need of improvement and have recently introduced changes to address these, though it is too early to evaluate their impact. For example, they have adapted the school's behaviour policy and changed the tracking and monitoring systems. However, the school has too many improvement priorities and a minority of actions to meet these intended goals are not sufficiently precise, including at departmental level.

The school has a suitable range of systems to gather first hand evidence. This includes lesson observations and work scrutiny. Leaders also gather the views of

parents and pupils. They have made valuable changes based on this feedback, such as those to the anti-racism policy. However, the school does not ensure that all the findings from these activities feed into its ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of its work. As a result, the self-evaluation and improvement planning cycle lacks cohesion and, in a few instances, important weaknesses have not been addressed swiftly or thoroughly enough.

Whilst leaders have a detailed understanding of everyday running of the school and individual pupil issues, they do not always consider sufficiently the impact of what they do and reflect on the findings from self-evaluation activities. In particular, they do not pay enough attention to judging the effectiveness of provision by its impact on pupils' skills. This makes it difficult for leaders to identify precisely the areas most in need of improvement.

Leaders at all levels analyse an appropriate range of internal and external data. However, the rigour of data analysis is too variable and, overall, the school does not compare its performance with that of similar schools thoroughly enough.

There is a growing culture of professional learning in the school. There are many beneficial opportunities for development that link appropriately to the needs of individuals, and to the school's priorities. Over the last few years, the school has focused on improving pedagogy. Teachers are now exploring new strategies through the learning and teaching group, the use of coaches and regular, timetabled peer observations. There is appropriate support for leaders to develop their skills.

The headteacher, business manager and governors manage the school's finances carefully and monitor spending closely. They have worked successfully to recover from a deficit budget position and now have a small surplus. The school is staffed and resourced appropriately. In recent years, the school has made good use of grant funding to support pupils eligible for free school meals. This has contributed to improved outcomes for these pupils, which until 2018 compared well with those of their counterparts in similar schools.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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